

[Josiah Waddle]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon Address 2889 Ohio St.

DATE December 5, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

1. Name and address of informant Josiah Waddle 2807 N. 24 St.
2. Date and time of interview December 1, 1938 2:00 to [9:00?]
3. Place of interview In the home of Mr. Waddle's Waddle
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant No one
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

No one

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Mr. Waddle and wife live in a five room apartment. The apartment is well furnished with old style furniture, pictures and relics. Their home is in a very nice neighborhood, and they seem to be the type of people that are easy to get along with. The room in which the interview was made contained a modern living room set, but the rest of the furniture was out of date but very comfortable. He has a number of old pictures hung about the room that he refers to often. Mrs. Waddle is a very neat housekeeper and everything was in order.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

Library of Congress

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE December 1, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Josiah Waddle 2807 N. 24. St.

1. Ancestry Negro
2. Place and date of birth Springfield Missouri — August 7, 1849.
3. Family Mr. Waddle's family consist of himself and wife Mrs Belle Waddle.
4. Place and date of birth

Mrs. Waddle was born in Enid Oklahoma 1879.

5. Education, with dates

Mr. Waddle has had no formal education but knows how to read and write. He taught himself how by reading books for children and later those a little harder until he had mastered many.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Mr. Waddle in receiving a government pension, at present. He worked as a barber until about two years ago when his health went bad. He is also a musician and plays several instruments.

7. Special skills and interests

Mr. Waddle is skilled as a musician. He now confines his interests to reminising of Civil war, Reconstruction and early day history.

Library of Congress

8. Community and religious activities

Mr. Waddle is no longer able to be active in any manner. He is a member of St. John's A.M.E. church.

9. Description of informant

Mr. Waddle is about 6-1 in height and weighs around 190 lbs. He is quite gray, dark in complexion, has brown eyes and is partly deaf.

10. Other points gained in interview

Worker was able to see a book of interest that Mr. Waddle owns that contains pictures of the Civil war that is quite valuable. The pictures are actual photographs of various fights, the dead, places that are historical and of the many officers of both armies. It was by far the most amazing book that worker has ever seen.

COMMENTS: The following Text will not be in the first person as it was necessary for worker to have the help of Mrs. Waddle as he is very deaf and the interview was changed to conform with the outline.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE December 1, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Josiah Waddle 2807 N. 24 St.

Mr. Waddle was born in Springfield, Missouri, Aug., 7, 1849. His father Thomas W. Waddle was owned together with forty some other slaves by a Mr. Waddle, who owned a plantation near Springfield. Although he was sold to a Mr. Childers, he retained the

Library of Congress

name of Waddle as he was fond of his former owner and wanted to keep the name of his parents. At the outbreak of the Civil war, although only twelve years of age, he wanted to enlist or be of some service. He spent all of his spare time learning the blacksmith and mechanical trade, so that he could serve in some capacity. The U.S. army soldiers came to Springfield and camped on the banks of Wilson Creek and they explained to him the meaning of the Civil War, that it would set him free. He served about six months with the 11th Calvary from Kansas, at which time his owner sent him to Van Buren Ark. to work for the Creek Indians. His owner to receive \$300.00 for his 12 months work. In 1863 he was returned to Springfield Mo. and tried to enlist. Being only 14 years of age, he was not able to enlist, but was given the job of taking care of the Captains horse. He was allowed the privilege of sleeping in the tent with the captain, and became very well acquainted with him. It was at this time that he became able to write a little. He later went to Ft. Leavenworth, where all of the army captains were located. However all troops were ordered to move from this territory and he was left stranded in this town. He then went to Ft. Scott where he was accepted into service, as he was large for his age. He served two years and seven months, receiving his honorable discharge Oct.,9, 1863. Be then returned to Ft. Scott and remained there with Capt. George Clark for several months. Mr. Waddle was satisfied for a while but as his family had moved to Topeka Kansas, he was quite anxious to join them so later in the year 1866 he went to Topeka and lived there until 1876. One of his sisters had married and moved to Nebraska City Nebr., so while again traveling about he stopped and visited with her. He remained in Nebraska City for two years and learned the barber trade. In 1878 he left this town and moved to Council Bluffs Iowa, where he opened a barber shop. As Omaha had more people in it [tha?] that Council Bluffs, he moved here in 1880, and opened a barber shop on 10th street between Harney and Howard. In this same block Dr. Stephenson had his office, where he lived with his wife and three children. The family left Omaha and moved east, leaving no relatives in Omaha.

Mr. Waddle was well acquainted with Dr. Stephenson as he was his family physician. It was about this time that he was beginning to become interested in musical instruments. So

Library of Congress

in his spare time he began practicing practicing on the alto horn. In 1885 Mr. Waddle sent to Topeka for his mother so that she could have a home as his father had died. In this same year he opened a much nicer barber shop at 16th and Webster street, in the basement of the old Roddle [?] Pharmacy which was one of the largest drug stores in the city. Mr. Waddle received the bulk of his trade from the Union Pacific employes, catering to White people only. He married about two years and although three children were born to them they all died at an early age. His first wife is also dead. In 1900 Mr. Waddle left Omaha and went to Minneapolis Minn., where he opened another barber shop. Between the two towns of Minneapolis and St. Paul he was able to earn a very nice living. He did not stay in these cities very long but left there for Winnipeg Canada, where he barbered and organized his first band. This band was composed of all white persons and was the first of its kind in that part of the country. Mr. Waddle was quite proud of his success and decided to return to Omaha and go back into business. He was also determined to organize a band composed of Negroes. He had tried this before and had met with a degree of success, but now he wanted a larger and better band. In 1902 he returned to Omaha and again opened a barber shop on 14th Street and started a Negro band. This band was composed of fifteen pieces and played for county fairs, carnivals and chatauquas, for several years. In 1914 Mr. Waddle tried his hand at organizing a band composed of women only. For one year he trained them and gave them lessons on various instruments. He formed a very nice band and secured engagements all over the country, playing for minstral shows, and carnivals. While on one of these tours, he met Miss Belle Moore in Enid Oklahoma, and married her on March 21, 1916. He stayed in that part of the country for awhile but returned to Omaha in 1918 and again opened a barber shop on 27th and Lake St. He remained at this location for several years and continued to give music lessons and take part with his band. About 1930 he moved his barber shop to 24th and Lake St., and again he started another ladies band. He did not have the success with this one that he did with the other one as several of the ladies in the band joined ochestras, and left Omaha. However Mr. Waddle's has the satisfaction of seeing some of his former pupils in bands

Library of Congress

of their own. One of his most famous pupils is Lloyd Hunter owner of the Lloyd Hunter orchestra, which is one of the most popular orchestras' in the midwest.

Mr. Waddle said that he attended the funeral of President Garfield, and cast his first vote for President U.S. Grant. He is now living very comfortable on his pension, and is indeed grateful for the trip given all G.A.R. members the past summer to Gettysburg Pa. He said that they were treated like royal people. The government paid their transportation, as all of the soldiers needed a companion. They likewise received money for meals, three a day, and their lodging expense. He said that it was by far the most enjoyable trip that he has ever had, although he has traveled all about the country.

COMMENTS: Mr. Waddle was the first Negro musician to organize a band in Omaha and one of the first barbers in Omaha.